

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9536

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BRIDGETOWN 1601

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT VI

SUBJ: BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS: GENERAL ELECTIONS

1. REPORTS FROM ROADTOWN, TORTOLA, INDICATE GENERAL ELECTIONS OF SEPT 1 IN BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS (BVI) EXTREMELY CLOSE, WITH GOVERNING UNITED PARTY (UP) AND OPPOSITION VIRGIN ISLANDS PARTY EACH TAKING THREE SEATS AND INDEPENDENT RALPH O'NEAL WINNING SEVENTH.

2. SINCE O'NEAL IS REGARDED AS WELL DISPOSED TOWARD UP, PRESENT CHIEF MINISTER WHEATLEY AS UP LEADER WILL PROBABLY FORM NEW GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, UP VICTORY IN ONE CONTEST WAS BY MARGIN OF A SINGLE VOTE; VIP CANDIDATE IN THAT CONTEST IS CHALLENGING AWARD OF SEAT TO UP CANDIDATE AND, FOLLOWING REJECTION BY ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF DEMAND FOR RECOUNT, HAS STATED HE WILL APPEAL TO BVI HIGH COURT.

3. COMMENT: GIVEN LACK OF REGULAR EMBASSY CONTACT WITH BVI, WHICH IS FARTHER AWAY FROM BRIDGETOWN THAN ANY OTHER TERRITORY WE SERVE, OUR INFORMATION ON EVENTS THERE TENDS TO BE SKETCHY. HOWEVER, DCM PLANS TO STOP OFF IN TORTOLA ON WAY BACK FROM FORTHCOMING COMMERCIAL OFFICERS' CONFERENCE IN SAN JUAN, AND EMBASSY WILL SUBMIT MORE DETAILED REPORT ON ELECTIONS FOLLOWING HIS RETURN.

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